

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bahrain's Economic Development Board Meets with Senior Officials and Business Leaders at Maryland State House

WASHINGTON—June 20, 2011 — A delegation representing Bahrain's Economic Development Board (EDB) visited Annapolis, Maryland after receiving an invitation from the Hon. Anthony G. Brown, Maryland's Lieutenant Governor. Lieutenant Governor Brown hosted the delegation from Bahrain and members of the Maryland business community at the Maryland State House. The delegation, led by the EDB's CEO, H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Essa Al-Khalifa, was supported by The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC).

David Hamod, President and CEO of the U.S.-Arab Chamber noted, "Bahrain continues to position itself as a gateway to the larger Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region." Hamod continued, "Maryland is among the top ten exporting states to Bahrain, and today's meeting by high-level officials helped to build on the increasingly close ties between Maryland and Bahrain."

Hamod moderated a joint discussion that went to bolster trade and investment opportunities. During the discussion, members of the EDB reaffirmed Bahrain's focus on information and communications technology (ICT), healthcare, and education. Sheikh Mohammed, EDB's CEO, made note of Bahrain's burgeoning technology infrastructure.

Dr. Essam Fakhro, Chairman of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with leaders from the Government of Bahrain took part in the joint discussion. Members of the Bahraini delegation also included business leaders representing a variety of industries including aluminum, plastics, general manufacturing, information and communications technology, food processing, financial services, construction, and real estate.

Bill Jones, Director of Middle East Operations at Zephyr, an environmental services company, took part in the discussion. Zephyr works in Bahrain and throughout the greater Gulf region. Jones, concluded, "We appreciate the EDB delegation's willingness to reach out to Maryland. Delegations like this one help us to identify networked and trustworthy people, an important part of doing business in that part of the world."

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Source: The Embassy of Bahrain
Contact: Matt Lauer
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2011 JUN 27 PM 4:28

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bahraini Crown Prince Calls for Positive Participation During National Dialogue

MANAMA—June 18, 2011—His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince of Bahrain yesterday urged participants in the upcoming national dialogue to maintain an atmosphere of optimism and unity in order to gain as much ground as possible from the talks.

“Hope must prevail as the spirit of a comprehensive national dialogue requires all parties to be positive and optimistic and to look to the future with a holistic view that will lift up the nation again,” His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa said.

In February, the government originally offered to engage in a national dialogue with opposition parties, but the call was resisted by protesters who demanded a series of preconditions, Gulf News reports.

Wednesday, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Mike Posner visited Bahrain and noted that because of the original delay, a national dialogue is even more urgent now.

“We are mindful of the pressing need here for everyone in society to begin an engagement that will start to rebuild tolerance, mutual respect and a process for navigating divisions,” he said.

This need necessitates a positive outlook from all parties during the national dialogue, His Royal Highness said.

“We are about to enter a new phase of our lives that needs the unity of all people in order to overcome the crisis and be optimistic about Bahrain,” he said.

The national dialogue, set to begin July 1, will be chaired by Speaker of the Lower House of Elected Representatives Khalifa Al Dhahrani and is open to political and civil societies.

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Source: Kingdom of Bahrain
Contact: Rose Sager
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2011 JUN 27 PM 4:28

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Statement by the Human Rights Office, Ministry of Social Development
of Bahrain**

MANAMA—June 17, 2011 — The Human Rights Office in the Ministry of Social Development expressed its disappointment at the recent statement in Geneva by the United States Ambassador, which includes Bahrain in a list of nations alleged to have violated fundamental freedoms.

“As President Obama has noted, the U.S. and Bahrain are friends. As such it is important that friends speak openly and honestly with each other,” said a statement by the Office of Human Rights. “We regret the U.S. Administration’s rush to judgment on allegations that have yet to be proven in courts of law. The cornerstone of advanced societies - the rule of law - provides guarantees not only of freedom of expression but also of people’s security. Bahrain’s judicial system is highly competent and its processes should be respected as it weighs this balance.”

“The Office is surprised that this statement should have been issued so shortly after a fruitful visit to the United States by senior Bahraini officials, during which they underlined to the US Administration the Kingdom of Bahrain’s determination to maintain and protect human rights, and outlined the moves currently underway to investigate and remedy any shortcomings or lapses in this regard. Moreover, the statement coincided with a visit to Bahrain by Mr. Michael Posner, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, during which these productive discussions were continued. The statement also failed to recognize Bahrain’s ongoing cooperative stance on human rights, as demonstrated by its invitation to the OHCHR to send a team to the Kingdom. The Office therefore regrets that, in both its timing and content, Ambassador Donahoe’s statement did not properly account for or reflect these issues.”

The Human Rights Office’s statement went on: “Bahrain experienced regrettable events necessitating the declaration of the State of National Safety, which ended on 1 June and of which the Kingdom of Bahrain duly informed the United Nations. Regrettably, the protests in Bahrain turned violent, threatening the safety, lives, property and livelihoods of citizens and residents from all parts of society, and seeking to undermine the rule of law. In such circumstances, all Bahrainis are entitled to look to their government for lawful protection from such serious and immediate threats to their most fundamental rights. The Kingdom of Bahrain has a strong commitment to maintaining the rights of all our people, and we take allegations of violations extremely seriously. Our sincere hope is that all grievances will be fully addressed in the upcoming National Dialogue.”

Finally, the Office underlined the Kingdom of Bahrain’s unwavering commitment to working with all parties both domestically and internationally, including the United Nations and the United States, to promote and protect human rights and fundamental

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freedoms, expressing the government's desire to continue and expand such cooperation in the years ahead.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bahrain's Retail Numbers Rebound Quickly

MANAMA—June 16, 2011 — Bahrain's retail sector is steadily regaining its strength, reaching 70 percent of its former trade after experiencing a decline during February and March, Bahrain's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) states.

"We have been busy picking up the pieces and have done well, thanks to government efforts but as traders we also need to hammer out solutions by taking tough decisions," BCCI Retail and Traditional Markets Committee Head Jawad Al Hawaj said.

A number of BCCI initiatives are aimed at providing these solutions, including a new focus on small and medium enterprise support. BCCI is working with banks to secure loans for the smaller scale shops and ease required procedures. The organization has also bargained with landlords on retailers' behalves to lessen rent burdens.

"There was an issue with rents, but most landlords have agreed to either postpone collections or waive rents for a few months," Al Hawaj said.

In addition, retailers are looking to next month's festival to spark trade even further.

"Many traders rightly have reservations but we are offering suggestions and incentives for them to take part. We all have a lot of expectations from the July events."

Plans to rework Bahrain's City Center infrastructure are also on the table.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BAHRAIN'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES WELCOMES
ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT, LAUDS LONGSTANDING TIES**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—June 10, 2011—The Kingdom of Bahrain's ambassador to the United States, Houda Nonoo, welcomed the remarks of President Obama, Vice President Biden and Secretary of State Clinton on the occasion of His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa's visit to Washington, D.C.

His Royal Highness spent time with U.S. President Barack Obama following his meeting with National Security Advisor Tom Donilon at the White House on Tuesday. In the meeting, President Obama conveyed continued U.S. support for the Kingdom of Bahrain in its efforts to promote comprehensive national dialogue.

Ambassador Nonoo stated: "We welcome support from the White House and President Obama. Bahrain is taking meaningful steps to unite our people and we are happy that the United States is behind us in our efforts as we create a stronger democratic process for all Bahrainis."

His Royal Highness also met with Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during his visit.

Ambassador Nonoo reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to ensuring comprehensive human rights for all Bahrainis: "Bahrain is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society and we have a strong tradition of embracing the differences of all Bahrainis. We are taking measures to make sure that those who committed wrongdoing in recent months are held accountable and brought to justice. Our comprehensive National Dialogue, which will start on July 1, will be a crucial step in upholding these principles."

The Ambassador concluded: "Bahrain's commitment to the United States is unshakable. We are proud to be a partner of the U.S. in peace and democracy in the Middle East. The U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet has long called Bahrain home and we stand firmly committed to this relationship."

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2011 JUN 27 PM 4:29

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BAHRAIN HOSTS INAUGURAL GCC GAMES

MANAMA—June 9, 2011—This October, Bahrain will host the first ever Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Games, uniting the six GCC nations in one "Olympic-like" competition.

"This will be the biggest and most prestigious event for an athlete at the Gulf level," Bahrain Olympic Committee Secretary General Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Khalifa said.

"Bahrain One One," the official 2011 GCC Games name, will be held October 11 to 22 in various sporting venues across the country and features competitions in soccer, bowling, road cycling, swimming, basketball, handball, volleyball, bowling and endurance horseback riding. More than 1,500 athletes are anticipated to compete in the games' 11 categories, including "goal ball," a sport designed for blind athletes.

"We expect Bahrain 11 will attract major attention from people all around the globe, and as such, we have a responsibility to present the best of what Bahrain has to offer and demonstrate its ability in hosting events of this size and caliber," Shaikh Ahmed said in an interview with Gulf Daily News.

To this aim, the opening ceremony will showcase Bahrain's rich culture to the government dignitaries and sports personalities in attendance, as well as pay tribute to the country's competing athletes who seek to defend their home soil.

"It will be a challenge for all our sportsmen and women to perform," Shaikh Ahmed said. "We are pushing our teams to go for gold. We hope to see as many of our athletes on the podium."

Host responsibilities for the GCC Games will alternate between GCC countries every four years. The next games in 2015 will be held in Saudi Arabia.

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2011 JUN 27 PM 4:29

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

History in the Making: First Female Priest in Middle East Ordained in Bahrain

MANAMA—June 6, 2011—Yesterday, Bahrain hosted a ceremony to appoint the Rev. Catherine Dawkins as the first female priest in the Middle East. A vote by members of the Anglican dioceses of Egypt, Jerusalem, North Africa and the Gulf confirmed her appointment.

Dawkins first moved from England to the Anglican Chaplaincy in Aden, Yemen with her husband the Rev. Nigel Dawkins. Upon her arrival in Yemen she was initially not allowed to be ordained. "I'm still reeling in the disbelief that it's happening," Dawkins said. "It's an amazing privilege for me."

Dawkins worked several years in Yemen and was ordained on June 5 by the Rev. Michael Lewis, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf in a ceremony held at St. Christopher's Cathedral in Manama, regarded as the official cathedral of the Gulf.

Describing her time in Yemen, Dawkins said, "The bishop there was very supportive of me coming to Aden and very happy to ordain me as a deacon to work in the church, yet at that time he said he was sorry but he was not able to have women priests."

"We are privileged to host this big occasion, not because it is just a Bahraini event but it holds significance for the whole of the region and this diocese, and it is a joy to be involved in this process," the Rev. Chris Butt, dean of St. Christopher's cathedral, said.

The Rev. Butt noted the importance of the evolving role of women in the church. "It is a sign of recognition in the wider church that women have a final role in the ministry of the church and not a secondary. It is also recognition of the gifts and special insights that women bring into the ministry in a powerful way," he said.

Dawkins will be continuing her work in Dubai.

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Source: Gulf Daily News

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2011 JUN 27 PM 4:29

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Government of Bahrain sets \$16.44 Billion Budget for Two Years

MANAMA — June 5, 2011 — His Majesty, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa announced his approval of a \$16.44 billion budget for the next two years — which represents a 44 percent increase in expenditures by the government.

“His Majesty passed the law for the budget for 2011 and 2012... it will approve expenditures for 6.198 billion Bahraini dinars [\$16.44 billion],” a Finance Ministry spokesman told Reuters.

Finance Minister Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Khalifa welcomed the passage of the budget, saying that the government is doing all it can to address economic concerns.

“The budget is a total package that takes into consideration income and spending,” he said in an interview with Trade Arabia. “We have ambitions and whatever the government could have fulfilled it agreed to.”

The passage of the budget reinforces His Majesty, King Hamad’s ongoing commitment to Bahrain’s economy.

“The goal is to stimulate productivity, boost competitiveness, encourage and attract investments and enhance human resource efficiency,” His Royal Highness said in a speech earlier this week.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce also announced an increase of cement production to 30,000 tons per week to invigorate the Kingdom’s construction sector.

These steps in support of economic growth follow the lifting of the State of National Safety earlier this week.

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SOURCE: Kingdom of Bahrain

Contact: Matt Lauer

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Crown Prince of Bahrain to Visit the White House

MANAMA -- June 4, 2011 -- The White House confirmed it will host His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa during his upcoming visit to the United States this week. The Crown Prince will discuss a wide number of topics with senior U.S. officials during his trip.

His Royal Highness' visit coincides with renewed calls by His Majesty, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa for a comprehensive national dialogue.

When interviewed by the Wall Street Journal about the visit, a senior Obama administration official expressed his optimism about the proposed national dialogue.

"The Bahrainis are making an effort to launch a national dialogue," the official said. "The king proposed this in his speech this week, and the largest political society—Al Wefaq—has welcomed it. We think this is a positive sign."

His Royal Highness' visit to the United States follows the lifting of the State of National Safety by His Majesty King Hamad.

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National Safety Court Sentences 21 for Plot to Violently Overthrow Government

WASHINGTON (June 22)—The Military prosecutor in Bahrain's Lower National Safety Court announced that 21 individuals have been convicted of plotting to violently topple Bahrain's government, inciting violence, destroying property and passing forward sensitive intelligence information to a terrorist organization in a foreign country.

All defendants had access to legal council and the full breadth of rights guaranteed to all Bahrainis under its progressive, transparent legal system. These rights include the ability to appeal the issued verdicts within fifteen days of their being handed down.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterated its commitment to the comprehensive National Dialogue set to begin on July 1.

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2011 JUN 27 PM 4:29

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BAHRAINI SUMMER FESTIVAL SENDS MESSAGE OF
OPTIMISM AND UNITY**

Manama—June 14, 2011—In light of recent events, Bahrain's Ministry of Culture will use this year's third annual summer festival to unite Bahrainis in a celebration of hope, love and optimism for their country. As planned, the month-long July festival will honor rich cultural heritages of the world, but this year, the festival will also highlight Bahrain's commitment to a positive and progressive future.

Events under the 2011 festival slogan, "A Victory of Joy," will be educational, cultural and family-focused, and will capture the spirit of this year's theme. Activities ranging from artist workshops and electronic games to musical tributes and Bollywood dance performances are aimed at uniting residents and tourists in an atmosphere of acceptance.

According to Ministry of Culture Public Relations and Media Specialist, Dana Abdulghani, the 2011 festivities will be different "because it is spreading the message of hope and love between people and for people to be optimistic and have hope."

The "A Victory of Joy" summer festival will be held at Arad Fort, Cultural Hall and Bahrain International Exhibition and Convention Center from July 1 to July 31.

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Source: Bahrain News Agency
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2011 JUN 27 PM 4: 29

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Bahrain King Committed to Path of Reform as
National Dialogue Approaches**

MANAMA—June 15, 2011—King Hamad of Bahrain yesterday reaffirmed his commitment to reform as he continued a series of meetings aimed at spreading awareness of his initiatives among Bahraini citizens.

Speaking to residents of Muharraq, Bahrain, the King ensured that reforms that began a decade ago would resume and spur further developments to lead the country on a path to success.

"Reform is being set back in motion despite the damage it has suffered due to the recent deplorable incidents," King Hamad said as he reinforced the country's dedication to family rights, government transparency, and the principles of human rights, justice and equality.

With the National Dialogue set to begin July 1, King Hamad remains hopeful that the dialogue will result in a more effective government and a legislature better able to respond to the needs of citizens.

"We called for the unconditional dialogue that yields a consensus which bolsters our national march," he said.

The King also expressed confidence that his country will learn from its past and be motivated by its rich history to work together toward a positive future.

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